

In Despair by NKNovak

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Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Comedian!Richie - Character, Eddie Kaspbrak, Nurse!Eddie - Character, Original Female Character - Isabella "Iz" Sucre, Original Female Character - Wren Winters, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Writer!Richie

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak/Myra Kaspbrak, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

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Summary:

Why in God's name would anyone choose to go back to high school? I mean, it is just one night and it's a reunion but still.

In Despair

Author's Note:

Part of me wanted to name this “It’s not my fault you don’t like girls” but instead I named it “In Despair” after the poem by Constantine Cavafy.

Also, I don’t know if you could tell but I kind of based Richie’s career of John Mulaney’s career.

Junk mail, electric bill, water bill, more junk, and. . . a letter from Derry Public High School? His parents never forwarded letters from his high school, usually, cause they were asking for money and Richie if given the chance would send back boxes of over \$100 all in pennies. Why? Well, why not?

Richie ripped open the letter. It was an invitation to his high school reunion. Shit. . . Had it really been 10 years? Richie frowned, he hadn’t talked to any of his friends in 10 years. He hadn’t seen any of them in 10 years. He should go and see all of them again. But why? The lack of communication was a team effort, maybe his fears from his teenage years came true and once he left for UCLA they all just cut his annoying ass out of their lives. Richie shook his head as if he could shake thoughts like that from his mind. He really needed to stop thinking shit like that. His friends wouldn’t have done that. They were all busy during their college years with classes and part-time jobs. But he still decided not to go to the reunion

And that’s why, a few weeks later, he was standing in front of Derry Public High School, what was he waiting for? What was he scared of?

“Is that famous comedian, Richard Tozier? Can I have your autograph?!”

“Bevvv!” Richie turned to face the speaker, wrapping his old friend in a hug, “and who is this with you?” He asked looking at the man whose hand she was holding.

“It’s Ben, Rich” Ben replied. Beverly and Ben had met a year before

the reunion and started dating.

"Wow, Ben, you look" Richie paused for a moment before just saying, "hot!"

"Nice to see you again too, Richie," Ben said.

"What are you waiting for?" Beverly asked.

Richie shrugged, "it's been a while"

Beverly nodded, "ten years. Aren't you excited to see everyone again?"

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Richie, Beverly, and Ben recognized the rest of the losers the minute they laid eyes on them, all of them were here. Bill, Stan, Mike, and Eddie were all talking, dropping the conversation to greet Richie, Bev, and Bill. Bill introduced his fiancé, Audra, who he was with.

They all caught up. Bill was an author, published one book so far and was working on another, with his first book people loved it, for the most part, a lot of people found the ending to be a disappointment. The losers who had read his book didn't comment on the ending but mentioned looking forward to his next one. Mike still lives in Derry and worked in the library. Stan mentioned getting engaged to Patty, "She's here, she just left with Myra to get a drink from the bar."

"Whose Myra?" Richie asked.

"My wife" Eddie replied. Eddie pretended he didn't notice Richie's smile drop as his eyes landed on the ring, it only lasted a second before Richie plastered a fake but convincing smile back on his face.

Patty and Myra joined the group, Patty was gorgeous. Richie was happy for Stan. Myra, on the other hand, reminded Richie of someone, he just couldn't put his finger on who.

Richie, Bev, and Ben introduced themselves to Patty and Myra. Ben and Bev talked about meeting each other again and dating. Finally, Richie mentioned moving to New York and getting staffed as a writer

on SNL. Despite being virtually unknown he had created characters that had already made multiple appearances and were sure to become iconic.

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Richie knew he shouldn't have come to the stupid reunion. He couldn't be around Eddie. When he looked at Eddie all he saw were memories.

He remembered sharing a bed with Eddie when they had sleepovers when they were kids. It was so natural it just continued as they got older.

He remembered pretending to be struggling with his assignments and studying just so Eddie would feel like Richie had to come over to his house so he could help him. Eddie got so mad when he asked the teacher that ran the National Honor Society for APUSH tutor and got Richard Tozier!

"You lied about needing my help for years. You wasted my time!"

"Wasted? That hurts my feelings, Eds. I could never say a moment with your cute face was wasted."

"Don't call me Eds"

He remembered Eddie crawling into his bed for the first time when they were teenagers (usually it was the other way around.) Eddie had snuck over to Richie's house after a particularly bad argument with his mom (he didn't argue with her much, so on the rare occasion he did, it was always bad). Eddie didn't have to sneak through Richie's window, Wentworth and Maggie were always very welcoming to all Richie's friends, Eddie included. Although, they did find it odd that he had come over so late in the day. He went straight up to Richie's room and crawled into his bed. Richie wasn't sleeping, he was still up reading a book he had to finish for English.

"Eddie?"

"Tired."

“Want to talk about it?” Richie asked.

“No” Eddie replied. However, when Richie settled down next to him Eddie would tell him every detail of what happened. What Richie didn’t know was that Eddie had come over to Richie’s because he couldn’t sleep so his first idea to solve that was to sneak out his window, bike to Richie’s, and climb into his bed because he always felt comfortable and content when he was with Richie and therefore, would be able to sleep curled up next to him. Eddie was right.

He remembered his first kiss with Eddie. They were in an empty classroom during study hall actually using that time to study for the Algebra midterm Richie had next period. Eddie was explaining something to him, Richie doesn’t remember what, he wasn’t listening to the words he saying, just listening to his voice. Richie was looking at Eddie’s eyes, so intensely focused on the work before them he didn’t notice Richie’s gaze was set upon him. When he looked up, he paused.

“Stop” Eddie said.

“Stop what?” Richie asked.

“You know what”

Richie was lost.

Eddie continued, “looking at me like that”

Richie didn’t look away. “What am I looking at you like?”

Eddie struggled to find the words to describe it, “like. . . Like you. . . I-“

Richie didn’t even realize he was leaning in till his lips met Eddies. Eddie didn’t kiss back but he didn’t push Richie away.

“Richie” Eddie whispered.

The bell rang.

“Walk home with me after school,” Eddie said. Eddie acted

impulsively for once giving Richie a quick kiss before wishing him luck on his Algebra test.

The memories came back fast and out of order but the last one Richie remembered was the end of their relationship, whatever you call what they had. They were making out on Eddie's bed. Richie's hands under Eddie's shirt, while Eddie's arms were around Richie's neck, making sure he didn't go too far when he pulled away from the kisses to tell Eddie how much he loved him or how beautiful he looked, just to see him blush.

Then Eddie's arms moved from around Richie's neck, he cupped Richie's face and pulled back from Richie's mouth.

"Hey Rich?"

Yeah, Eds?"

"What are we?" Eddie whispered.

Richie leaned in and kissed him, that was not the response Eddie wanted-

"This seat taken?" Richie was pulled from his thoughts by Bev's voice. Bev sat down without waiting for an answer, the bar was empty except for Richie and now her.

Richie downed the rest of his drink. "Do you mind? I'm trying to get drunk"

"I was going to ask you if you wanted to smoke"

Richie got up and moved towards the exit with Beverly. "I'm trying to quit," he told her.

"So am I but you look like you need it."

Richie had no smokes or lighter on him so after Beverly lit her cigarette she passed the box and lighter to Richie.

"I missed this" Bev said.

“Smoking?”

“No, Richie, you and everyone else. All of us hanging out.”

“You like the additions?”

“If you bothered to talk to them you’d know Patty is so nice and makes Stan very happy.”

“I saw them dancing.” Richie knew Stan and what it looked like when he was actually happy. He looked like that when he was with Patty. Richie liked Patty, even if he hadn’t taken the time to get to know her.

“Audra’s nice too.”

“And. . .?”

Bev sighed, “Myra’s. . .” She struggled to find the right words.

“Sonia!” Richie just remembered who Myra reminded him of.

Eddie walked out. It didn’t seem like he heard them.

“Just like old days?” Eddie asked looking between Bev and Richie.

“If it was old days we’d be hiding under the bleachers” Richie replied.

“Or we’d be in Bills basement and this would be pot,” Bev said as she let her cigarette fall and ground it in the pavement with her boot before walking inside, leaving Richie and Eddie alone.

“I feel like I’ve barely seen you all night.” Eddie said.

“Oh really?” Richie replied. “All I’ve been seeing is you, I keep getting these memories I’ve seem to forgotten, about us-” Eddie stiffened as Richie continued “-and our childhood here” Richie shrugged since Eddie wasn’t talking, “maybe I just blocked it out cause I hate Derry so fucking much” Richie paused dropped his cigarette before it burnt his fingertips and ground it into the pavement like Bev had done, but he didn’t move, just looked at

Eddie, “but not all of the memories are bad.”

“Rich”

Richie moved towards Eddie, “yeah”

Eddie took a step back, knowing what Richie wanted knowing the “good memories” Richie was referring to, “I’m married”

“Do you love her?”

“I’m *married* to her”

“That’s not a yes, Eddie.” Richie stepped closer. “Do you love me?”

“No,” Eddie said but didn’t back away.

“I love you. I loved you then and I still do now. I had trouble expressing it when I was a teen, I was still struggling with myself, what I was, what I felt but when I was with you there was no struggling-”

“Richie” Eddie tried to silence him even though he knew it wouldn’t work.

“I know we never said it, we never labeled what we were, and that was my fault, but-“

“Stop!” Eddie shouted. “We were kids, Richie! I was. . . experimenting. I’m not gay like you, I never was. You helped me realize that. I’m married to Myra, I’m happy!” With that, Eddie marched inside.

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Richie, without even realizing it, had been waiting for Eddie. Waiting for them to meet and for sparks to fly, they would pick up where they left off, with a stronger, real relationship now. Obviously, that didn’t happen. He hadn’t moved forward with his life but Eddie had and he was happy (or at least that’s what he said.) He knew Eddie like he knew Stan so while he knew Stan was truly happy he knew Eddie was lying, he wasn’t happy with Myra. But Eddie made his choice and

now he had to live with it. Richie, on the other hand, had been bestowed with a new freedom. He could go out and date whoever he wanted, the part of him holding out hope that he and Eddie could be together was gone. Although, when he did start dating again, it wasn't so much dating as hooking up, and all the guys he hooked up with (short and slender, dark hair, brown eyes) bared a striking resemblance to Eddie. So, maybe, he wasn't as over Eddie as he wanted to be. If Richie were to be completely honest with himself he would see that he wasn't over Eddie at all, he was searching for Eddie in all the lovers whose names he cannot remember, never able to find him.

Richie's work was not affected. He's still as funny as he was. His sketches often getting picked and, with the help of the cast who played his characters, got big laughs from the crowd.

Then Richie got hit by a car. He was fine. Well, not fine but he survived. He got sent to the hospital immediately. He needed stitches and a cast for his arm, but the hospital wasn't quick to let him go, his doctor wanted to keep him under observation. Richie didn't mind too much. He didn't like sharing a room but at least they had a curtain which divided it. He was laying in his hospital bed, trying to come up with a funny way to spin this for his next special when he heard a familiar voice talking to his roommate on the other side of the curtain. He stood, walked over to it, and pulled it back.

"Eddie"

"Richie?" Eddie spun around. "What happened to you?"

"I got hit by a car," Richie said, Eddie looked concerned but Richie just brushed it aside like it was nothing. "I didn't know you worked here or that you were a nurse"

"You left the reunion before you could do any real catching up with us and then left without saying goodbye. You never mentioned your comedy album to us"

"Oh that? That's just a- Wait. How did you find out about that." Richie smiled as he asked, "did you google me?"

Eddie turned back around to his patient. “I have work to do”

“You googled me!”

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The next time Richie saw Eddie, he was about to be discharged from the hospital. He was given crutches to help him walk with his broken leg. Before he left he asked Eddie for his cell phone number. Eddie was hesitant but gave in without much convincing, all Richie had to say was, “we used to be friends, Eddie, best friends. Why can’t we be that again?” Along with his phone number he gave him the number of the rest of the losers which, they all had exchanged numbers before leaving, Richie left long before that.

“Don’t forget your open your text with an apology for leaving without saying goodbye” Eddie said.

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Bev and Ben were both quick to forgive Richie. However, Bev, upon getting Richie’s number and called him, they talked for hours, Richie didn’t mention Eddie but did end the conversation by mentioning he still had to text the rest of the losers.

Mike and Stan also forgave Richie quickly. The only who held out was Bill but he couldn’t stay mad forever and Richie was invited into the group chat they made.

The losers were spread across America with Bill living in LA, Bev and Ben living together in Chicago, Patty and Stan in Georgia, and Mike still staying in Derry. Therefore, they mostly kept in contact via text, except for Eddie and Richie, who were able to go for drinks together when they had time off, although, it didn’t happen often.

One thing that could not be avoided, however, was Bev’s bachelorette party. The party consisted of Richie, Eddie, Stan, and 2 of Bev’s other close friends that the losers had not met yet (Bill and Mike went to Ben’s bachelor party). Bev’s girlfriends took her out for dinner at her favorite restaurant, splitting the bill between the of them, and then the trio of ladies met with Richie, Stan, and Eddie to go bar hopping

in Boystown.

Bev's close friend from college, Isabella "Iz" Sucre, was the one who planned the party (Richie wanted to help being the 'maid of honor' but Iz wanted to do it herself, probably for the best.) She picked the restaurant, planned the route for the bar-hopping, she offered to stay stone-cold sober if Bev and her friends wanted to get a little (a lot) drunk. On the other hand, Bev's other friend, Wren Winters, was great, until she had a little too much to drink. It went a little like this:

Stan, Eddie, and Richie all met up at the hotel they were staying at in Chicago. Iz texted them to tell them which bar they were heading too. The bachelorettes got their first, Bev smiling and hugging the trio of losers when they arrived. Although Iz and Wren had never met the losers, all five got along seamlessly. That was until they hit the third bar, Bev and Stan left for the dance floor and Iz started a conversation with the bartender. Eddie and Richie were talking when Wren interrupted, talking loudly, "I'm so glad you came!" She said to Eddie, "I was so worried you wouldn't!"

"Why wouldn't he?" Richie asked. "He loves Bev as much as the rest of us"

Wren shrugged, "I've never been married so I have no idea what it's really like but I thought maybe his divorce would stop him"

Richie glanced at Eddie, his expression unreadable, "divorce?"

"Yeah, you didn't know?" Wren asked.

"No, no. I know, I just forgot." It didn't surprise Richie that Wren knew about it, Wren had a way of knowing everything, but the fact that Eddie hadn't told him upset him. "Let's get another round of drinks" Richie announced. He downed his drink before joining Bev and Stan on the dance floor.

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The next day was a slow recovery day, before the wedding the following day. Stan texted Richie at noon to ask if he wanted to get lunch. Richie accepted his offer and agreed to meet him in the lobby.

He was with Eddie, which Richie expected but part of him hoped Eddie wouldn't be there. He felt betrayed. He made sure to ask Bev and Stan if they knew Eddie was divorced before the end of the night, they did. It was reasonable to assume that Ben, Bill, and Mike did too. He was the only one of Eddie's friends who didn't. He didn't mention it at lunch though. Instead, he left lunch early his excuse being, "I should check up on Bev, maid of honor duties and all that."

Beverly was home. She was fine, not hungover. Which was good because Richie was not here for 'maid of honor' stuff.

"Why didn't Eddie tell me he was divorced?" Richie asked.

Beverly shrugged, "why don't you ask him?"

"I thought we were friends. We were so close when we were kids"

"That's back when you were sleeping with each other" Richie and Eddie both wanted to keep their relationship a secret but Richie broke and told Stan and Bev, meanwhile Eddie told Bill. No one told Ben or Mike, they found out on their own just by watching how Richie and Eddie acted, going from arguing about Richie's vulgar jokes to sweet words and soft touches when they thought no one was looking.

"No! I mean, we were, but I meant before that. We were so close, best friends. I thought we had that again or at least I wanted to have that again. I keep trying to get close to Eddie but it feels like he keeps trying to keep me at arm's length."

"Again, why are you telling me this? Tell him this!"

"Your not very good at this whole cheering me up thing" Richie commented, "let's talk about tomorrow, then"

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The wedding the following day went off without a hitch. Since neither Ben nor Bev were religious they got married in a park. Richie walked Bev down the aisle then took his place as her maid of honor while they were married by a mutual friend from college who got ordained online. It was a small ceremony only a few family and

friends. After the ceremony, they all went to dinner. They rented a small room at a local restaurant, they didn't have many guests. Mike and Richie gave their best man and maid of honor speeches. Ben and Bev had their first dance. Later, everyone else danced and ate. At one point they played a few slow songs in a row, just for the couples. Eddie and Richie sat out for that.

"Why didn't you tell me you got divorced?" Richie asked. That was Richie, no beating around the bush, he had a burning question on his mind and he was going to ask it.

"I forgot"

"Bullshit"

"I thought you knew, you didn't notice I haven't been wearing my wedding ring?"

"I avoided looking at it." Richie said then continued, "why won't you tell me the real reason, Eddie?"

"I can't"

"I really thought we're making progress, you ripped my heart in half at the reunion but I got passed it, I was hoping you did too and we could have some semblance of a friendship but every time I try to--"

"You!"

"Huh?"

"You're the reason I got divorced, dickwad!"

"How am I the reason?"

"I was perfectly happy with Myra but then you had to show up at that stupid reunion, with your stupid height and smile and jokes and I could feel myself falling for you all over again. I think Myra saw it too from the way I was looking at you. She started to overwhelm and suffocate me so I stepped out. Instead of getting the fresh air I wanted I got you. You started to tell me how you felt and I never wanted to kiss you more, in order to stop myself I . . . I 'ripped your heart out.' I

really tried to make my marriage work after that but I couldn't. I couldn't stop thinking about you, I started watching SNL because of you, it's really funny, I've been able to tell which sketches are yours because they just scream your sense of humor, I listened to your comedy album too, at least your jokes have improved" Eddie had started to smile but then he remembered what he was talking about and it fell, "anyway, I wasn't happy anymore, if what you call what I was before the reunion happy, so I got divorced. Myra blamed you as the reason, she was right."

"And you didn't tell me because?"

"I know you have feelings for me and I am in love with you, Richie. But you should be with someone whose not a 29-year-old divorcee that hurt you and repressed his sexuality, again, for the past 10 years"

"Fuck that shit, Eddie!" Richie said. "I'm a 29-year-old who hasn't had a stable or lasting relationship since high school" he was talking about his relationship with Eddie and Eddie knew it, "it's like we were made for each other" Richie leaned down and kissed Eddie and Eddie kissed back.